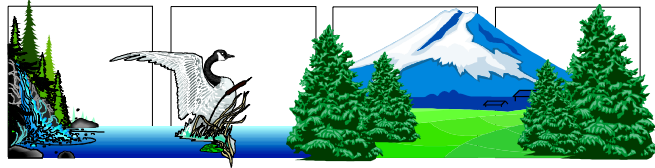


Habitat Conservation Ordinance

Frequently Asked Questions



What is the purpose of this ordinance?

The purpose of the Habitat Conservation Ordinance is to protect fish and wildlife habitat while allowing reasonable use of private property. The Ordinance lists and maps the types of designated habitat areas, such as streamside riparian areas, priority habitat and species areas and priority species point site buffers for endangered, threatened or sensitive species.

The Ordinance assures that applications for building single-family homes on existing legal lots will not be denied because of habitat issues. However, mitigation measures may be imposed that require such things as, setbacks between habitat features and the proposed home location, planting trees and shrubs, or improving shoreline conditions.



What types of designated habitat areas are covered by the Habitat Conservation Ordinance?

The following types of Habitat Conservation areas are typically shown on the countywide Geographic Information Systems (GIS) map, available at the Permit Center:

- **Riparian Habitat** is the most common and most biologically significant wildlife area. Riparian Habitat is found adjacent to seasonal and perennial streams. It is defined by measuring from the stream's ordinary high water mark to the edge of the 100 year floodplain or the following, whichever is greater:
 - 250 feet from streams which are typically wider than 20 feet
 - 200 feet from streams, which are typically 5-20 feet wide
 - 150 feet from streams are typically less than 5 feet wide

Gullies, rills, and man-made streams less than 6 inches wide, or do not have a defined stream bed and bank, are exempt from the Ordinance.

- **Non-Riparian Habitat** is a less common wildlife area identified as Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDF&W). Areas within 300 feet of Priority Species sites, or within 100 feet of Priority Habitat sites, are also subject to the Ordinance.
- **Priority Species Point Sites** are defined as areas within 1,000 feet of individual point sites, and are identified by WDF&W PHS criteria. These areas are delineated by the presence of threatened, endangered or sensitive (TES) species.

When is a Habitat Permit required?

The Ordinance requires Habitat Permit reviews for proposed clearing or land use activities within the above mentioned habitat areas.

Which activities are exempt from a Habitat Permit review?

- home remodel and / or the addition of up to 25% of the existing floor area
- pre-existing farming or agricultural areas

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- applications related to forestry other than Class IV General Forestry Permits
- clearing for emergencies (consult with County Habitat Biologist)
- clearing of nuisance vegetation such as Tansy Ragwort, Himalayan Blackberry or Scotch Broom, which utilize methods that minimize disturbance of soils and non- nuisance vegetation. (Note: clearing of nuisance vegetation must also be conducted in a manner consistent with the Wetlands, Building and Erosion Control Ordinances. To be safe, check with county staff before proceeding.)
- clearing as minimally necessary to construct wells, septic or other utility connections where reasonable alternatives don't exist
- clearing to construct a path up to 4 feet wide made of natural materials
- clearing as minimally necessary for surveying purposes



Are wetlands regulated by the Habitat Conservation Ordinance?

No, unless the wetlands are located in one of the designated areas covered by the Ordinance.

Do I need to hire a biologist?

Not necessarily, you can just follow the directions provided in the handout, "*Applicant's Submittal Checklist*." The handout provides instructions on how to complete the Habitat Permit Application form and how to prepare a Site Plan and narrative explaining your proposal. However, an applicant has the right to hire a qualified biologist to prepare the necessary permit documentation.

How do I apply for a Habitat Permit?

- ☐ Confer with the Customer Service Center Staff to determine if your property is within a Habitat Conservation Area. Staff are located in our downtown Vancouver office at 1300 Franklin St. or in Battle Ground at 701 East Main St.
- ☐ Read the "*Frequently Asked Questions*" handout in the application packet.
- ☐ Complete the Habitat Permit Application form. Draw a Site Plan and prepare a narrative using "*Applicant's Submittal Checklist*" handout as a guide.
- ☐ Submit the completed Habitat Permit Application form to the Permit Center.
- ☐ Include the processing fee, if submitted without a building or grading permit.

If the activity requires other County permits, such as a building or grading permit, submit the Habitat Permit Application together with the other applicable applications.

What is the process and time required reviewing a Habitat Permit?

After you submit a complete application packet to the Permit Center, a Counter Complete review process will take up to 7 days followed by a Fully Complete review process requiring up to 21 additional days. Once the application is deemed Fully Complete, the processing time for the permit is up to 21 days. County staff will review your permit application and make a determination on whether to approve the proposal, and what mitigation conditions will be required. In making their decision, county staff may consult with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Please allow up to seven weeks for completion of the plan review process. County staff decisions may be appealed to a Hearings Examiner.

Is a SEPA review required if the proposal requires a Habitat Permit?

A SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) review may be required if the site of the proposal has concerns relating to Critical Areas for shoreline management, floodplains or wetlands and the proposed development activity is not exempt from the Environmental Policy Ordinance. Such determinations will be made on a case by case basis.